

Rumors: Side One (The Great Mirroring of Actions) by ghibli territory

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Summary:

She'd been on the road for two years. She'd been everywhere she was allowed to go, and some places she wasn't. California was almost the newest place she'd found. And the people made it better.

1. Second Hand News (The Arrival)

The world sped fast past her, blurred images too ready to go on to be still for even a moment. Silence filled the small, yet large space of the vehicle she sat in, save for coughs from strangers and squeaks from the tires down below. Her body leaned against the cold metal of the bus, shying away from the man who'd sat down next to her. She was wary of him, even if he was too focused on his paper to notice her there. Her eyes stared through the glass window at the passing world. Even after all this time, Kali had learned to love what she saw of the world. It was reasonable- since her world had been nothing but cold tile and pain for eleven years prior. She shuddered at the thought of that. No, she had to let that go. She'd been free of that for years now. Two years on the road, away from the tests and the cruel men who hurt her- away from the one man who she called Papa, who she trusted. The memories were making her sick.

After another few minutes of the world speeding by, the bus came to a final stop, creaking and whistling while it jolted. The door opened, and everyone got up to scramble off, including the man with the paper. Kali lagged behind them, reaching up to grab her trust bag from the top shelf. She'd picked it up early on in her travels, and it had been there for her ever since. Throwing it on her shoulder, she left the bus quickly, not bothering to give the bus driver a second glance.

Immediately, her eyes squinted in response to the bright sunlight. Thousands of new senses hit her fast. New smells, and loud sounds- and a deadly heat covered her skin, burning her up. Kali frowned and slid her large jacket, which she'd picked up a few months ago, off her shoulders before tying it around her waist tightly. It didn't help much, but she could feel the small difference it made. Finally, she managed to get a good look around the bus station, spotting the image of painted words, brightly colored and peeling-

"WELCOME TO PASADENA, CA! THE CITY OF ROSES!"

California? She'd covered a fair amount of ground in her two years.

Kali turned on her heels and headed into the bus station for a minute, snatching up some maps and shoving them in her bag. The woman at the ticket counter eyed her warily, and she stared right back, giving her an almost nasty glare before heading back out into the blaring sun that was, apparently, Pasadena. Once out, she scanned her surroundings a little bit more. There were a fair amount of people, walking and talking and not really bothering her. That was fine. She took a deep breath, enjoying the weird new smells of the town, and made her way to the street. Kali let some cars pass before bravely darting across and mingling in with a small group walking along. Her eyes went to the bus station one last time. She'd be back, she knew it. But maybe she could find just a minute of rest here.

Hours in on this Pasadena adventure, and Kali was finding it less and less enjoyable.

There were too many people there, for starters. She didn't understand how anyone could stand being in such a hot place. It was also just too large of a city, and she still somehow wasn't able to find anywhere she could stay for a while. Even after she'd left the main part of the city and come across more rural streets, there was nowhere. Just well tamed yards and a lot of barking dogs that made her jump and run away.

It was late now. Thunder rolled over head, and she'd brought her jacket back around herself, trudging across what seemed like billions of small streets with dead ends and the same looking houses. Her arms went tight around her body in a self hug as she tried to keep warm. She could tell it was going to rain soon- Oh, yeah, Kali could feel the drops starting to hit her head. This was particularly uncool due to the freedom of her hair, which loved to frizz up in the rain. From the distance, another dog barked, and she tensed up to ignore it. Then, another closer bark. And another, and another- Kali turned around, eyes widening as the figure of a loose dog made way down the street. It wasn't particularly threatening, but she was still beyond frightened at the sight. So, what did she do? Well, what she did best.

She ran like hell.

Kali sprinted down the road as the rain started to get heavier, slowly dampening her clothes. The dog probably lost chase really soon after a minute, but she didn't stop running until the rain had gotten her clothes so wet that they weighed her down. Her feet slowed, and she wobbled once she came to a full stop, tightening her coat around her and looking everywhere. Lightning flashed across the sky. Where was she anymore? Was the dog still after her? What was she gonna do?

"Hey!"

Whipping around fast, Kali faced a small house, it's porch light flickering on as a small figure stepped out. From what she could see, it was a boy, dressed in pajamas with a confused expression on his face. "What are you doing out in the rain?" He asked, his brow furrowing. "You'll get pneumonia!"

Kali shivered, trying to find the words she needed but feeling her

throat close up at the worst of times. "...I'm lost." She finally stammered out. It wasn't much, but it was enough.

The boy continued to stare out at her, almost like he was contemplating something. She was ready to keep running, waiting for him to disappear back inside his home and forget about her. Just when she felt ready to turn, he looked around his porch, and then to her again. "Do you want to call someone? Or, just get out of the rain?" He asked. He sounded sincere, and Kali felt... Oddly hesitant about saying no. It was a place to keep dry. She looked down the street, then to the porch. And with a soft, but deep breath, she darted up to the porch and disappeared inside, letting herself into a warm bundle of future adventures.

Notes for the Chapter:

I know this idea seems odd, but I've been thinking about it ever since I finished season 2 because I just really want to explore Kali more, and I've seen weirder. I hope you guys liked it!

2. Dreams (The Connection)

Kali had never felt more uncomfortable in her whole life. Years of being in a lab, working through bus systems and interacting with the world as clueless as a child, that was nothing compared to this moment. Sitting on an itchy couch, in a stuffy house, across from a random boy she'd never known before. He stood before her, and while he didn't look angry or upset- more curious than anything- it felt like they'd been still like that for hours. No blinking. No talking. Just staring, examining one another like animals did in the wild.

It was agonizing.

She couldn't tell when it was really over. His eyes never seemed to leave her, even after so long. But after a time of silence, he did manage to say something.

"...So, what happened to you?"

The confusion was clear in his tone, and he rocked back and forth on his heels while he waited for her to answer. She simply furrowed her brow, equally as confused. "What do you mean?"

"Why were you just... in the rain?" He asked, moving to sit down on the ground. His energy went from his heels to his fingers, picking at his shirt. "You said you were lost. So, what's the deal? How did you get lost? Where are you trying to go?" She blinked at him, and thought about how she was asking herself the same things. Where was she headed to? It's not like she knew anyone. So far in her travels, she'd only really "met" one person- a guy in Wisconsin who drank way too much. He'd been nice, but she wouldn't consider him a

reliable place to crash.

After that? She had nothing.

"I'm... not really lost." Kali muttered. "Wandering. I don't have a *place*." She picked at her still damp clothes. The boy said nothing about what she mentioned, but he did notice her appearance. "Do you want something to change into? My mom says that sitting all wet and cold can be bad for you."

She nodded without hesitation, and he left her alone in an empty living room to get clothes. While he was gone, she looked around. The room was all sorts of orange, covered in weird art and posters. It wasn't bad. But if anything, it reflected the times. Kali stood from the couch and went to a picture hanging across the room. The glass was broken, and she avoided touching it. Behind the glass was a picture of a family- including the boy who'd let her in. A mother and father sat behind them. They looked happy.

"That's my mom." The boy's voice came from behind her, and Kali turned around to him. "And my dad. We went out to the beach that day." He said, his voice echoing nostalgia. He set down his stack of clothes and joined her side. "After that, we didn't go out to the beach. Not with my mom sick and all." Kali turned, raising a brow. "Sick?"

The boy only shrugged. "I don't know what was wrong with her. Dad just said she was sick. It killed her."

Kali shivered at that, looking at the woman with a new sense of sorrow. "I'm sorry. I think my mom is dead too." She muttered. "I

haven't been able to find her. That's why I'm really lost."

A moment of silence passed between them, and they understood each other. It felt nice. But it was quick. After that, the boy sucked in a cry and turned to her. "Clothes are on the couch, and the bathroom is down the hall." He told her. She nodded, and went to pick them up, ready to get rid of the wet attire. But, she paused, looking back at the boy. His eyes were back on his mother. "What's your name?" She asked. It was polite to know that sort of thing. He turned around and gave her a tiny smile. "I'm Billy."

She smiled back. "I'm Kali. Nice to meet you."

Then she turned on her heel and went to change, wondering about this situation.

Notes for the Chapter:

Yeah I sorta forgot about this but hey I'm back I'm still here